

Remembering the Past: 1st Provisional DMZ Marines hold first reunion aboard Parris Island

LANCE CPL. BRIAN KESTER
STAFF WRITER

Members of the 1st Provisional Demilitarized Zone Police Company, 1st Marine Division (Korea 1953-55), held their first reunion aboard the Depot April 23.

The salty veterans of the Korean War renewed acquaintances, relived old memories and took in the sights and sounds of Parris Island during their visit.

The 1st Provisional DMZ Police Company were the first Marines to undertake the task of patrolling the DMZ after the Korean War cease fire.

“The outfit was established in August of ‘53 a few days after the July 27 cease fire,” said retired Master Sgt. Robert Caulkins. “They



Lance Cpl. Brian Kester Robert Caulkins, a retired master sergeant with the 1st Provisional Demilitarized Zone Police Co., 1st Marine Division (Korea 1953-55), watches the 3rd RTBn. graduation ceremony at the Peatross Parade Deck April 23.

sent out the word to the Marine Division that they wanted volunteers to serve in this company. So you had people from the 1st Marines, 5th Marines, 7th Marines and 11th Marines, all regiments of the 1st Marine Division, as volunteers.”

The veterans recounted many experiences during their tour of duty in the DMZ in Korea. All of which followed their experiences in the war itself. Prior to volunteering for duty on the DMZ each had already served a combat tour in Korea.

“They took so many men from each regiment, and they put us in the 1st Provisional Demilitarized Zone Police Company,” said Joe Mulkern, a sergeant with the 1st Provisional DMZ Police Company. “We were the first ones to do it in Korea. We patrolled the DMZ catching line crossers or anyone who didn’t belong in there.”

The men also reminisced about their position and their jobs as the first line of defense along the DMZ.

“If the Chinese decided to come, we would have been the sacrificial lambs,” said Don Rock, a corporal with the 1st Provisional DMZ Police Company. “[If they advanced on our positions] we were dead. After us, it was the 5th Marines who would try to stop them and after that, it was up to the rest of the division.”

Always on the lookout for any signs of movement, the company patrolled in pairs at first and then in groups of four.

We were looking out for them and they were looking out for us, said Caulkins.

“It started out with about 150 men and wound up with a total strength of about 350,” he said. “The company served from August 1953 to February 1955, when it was relieved by the 24th Army Infantry Division.”

After the company was relieved and the members began to disperse, the bond between troops remained, but the

close contact was lost over time.

“We weren’t in contact anymore,” said Caulkins. “Like any organization, one guy will leave and a month or two later, another will leave. After coming back to the United States some would stay in the Marine Corps and others would do their own thing.”

Moving on with their lives to raise families, patrol the streets as police or to farm the land, the close bonds formed in Korea would once again bring them together. A need to find out what happened to the rest of the company led some of the members to explore the Internet for signs of their past.

“We all found each other on the Internet,” said Caulkins. “It just so happened that when computers became like furniture in the house, you start fiddling around.”

Before Caulkins knew it, he had searched and found the history of his old company as well as some of its remaining members. He found enough of them to assemble a get together, and allow this band of brothers to relive some fond memories of days gone by.

“The majority of the people here went through Parris Island, and we figured it was a good central point where we could meet and people would remember things,” he said.

Their company was a mix of men from across the 1st Marine Division, and their reunion mirrored that diverse mixture of men, as their members made the journey from a variety of states such as California, Wisconsin, Florida, New York, Massachusetts, Georgia and Minnesota.

After a brief tour and stops at the museum and exchange, the group bid their farewells to Parris Island and went on with the hope of keeping in contact with one another. They even joked of the next 50-year reunion in 2054.



Lance Cpl. Brian Kester Joe Mulkern, a former sergeant with the 1st Provisional Demilitarized Zone Police Co., 1st Marine Division (Korea 1953-55), watches the 3rd RTBn. graduation ceremony at the Peatross Parade Deck April 23. The visit marked the first time that some of the Marines had been on Parris Island in more than 50 years.

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license in her hometown prior to joining the Navy, initiated the visit with a goal of getting to know each of the Navy nurses.

“Get a mentor,” Rear Adm. Lescavage said as she spoke to the BMC nurses. “Everyone one should have a mentor, it helps you do wonders in life.”

That positive attitude, which has endeared the admiral to many of those she has served with, thoroughly impressed the BMC staff.

“Every one loves her; she’s a really good officer,” Colston said.

Rear Adm. Lescavage visited the BMC after she completed a brief visit at the Naval Hospital Beaufort.

“I stopped over here to see how things are going,” Rear Adm. Lescavage said. “I wasn’t surprised at all at the fact that everything is going well.”

Both the BMC and NHB personnel welcomed the admiral’s visit. Their only cause for complaint was that Rear Adm. Lescavage’s rigorous scheduled allowed for only a brief stay.

“She didn’t have a lot of time,” said Cmdr. Arthur Giguere, BMC commanding officer, about the 30-minute visit. “But she is always welcome here.”

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